

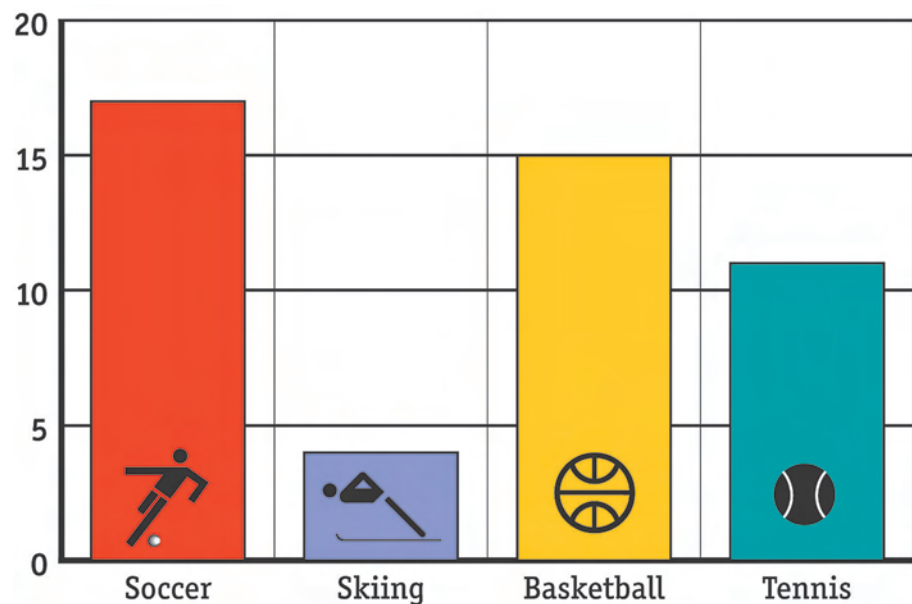
Background

Student surveys, where learners are polled on a specific topic, can be used for graphing activities. To prepare such an activity, the teacher develops a question that relates to the topic being studied and contains answers that can be displayed on a graph. For example, if students are learning about sports, the teacher could use a simple question such as:

What is your favorite sport to watch?

The teacher lists choices of sports students can vote for (e.g., soccer, skiing, basketball, tennis) and then polls the students by asking the question to the whole class. The teacher says each sport on the list, one at a time, and students raise their hands to vote for that sport. Each student is allowed to vote for only one sport. After the vote for each sport is completed, the teacher marks the vote totals on a graph.

STUDENTS' FAVORITE SPORTS TO WATCH



This sample graph shows that 17 students prefer soccer. Four prefer skiing. Fifteen prefer basketball. Eleven prefer tennis. (Total number of students: 47.)

Rationale for graphing activities

Graphing activities are becoming more and more common in English language classrooms for a number of reasons. First, they allow learners to use English in a purposeful and meaningful way to create a graph based on their own information. Second, they can be used with a wide variety of topics including, but not limited to, sports. Finally, they are appropriate for both small and large classes.

Preparing the activity

First you need to develop the questions that you are going to ask. Questions for this activity should be directly related to what you are covering in class. Create a question or two questions with very specific answers that can be displayed on a graph. For instance, if you are teaching students about sports activities, including soccer, you might ask questions about how much time students spend watching and participating in the sport.

1. How many minutes do you spend *watching* soccer each week?
2. How many minutes do you spend *playing* soccer each week?

Once you have created the questions, draw the template or form for the graph on the board or on a large sheet of paper. It is better to draw the form on paper because then you can use it for more than one class period. Be sure to list the answers to the question on the graph.

Using the activity with students

Introduce or review the key language and vocabulary, for instance, the words *soccer* (most students call this sport *football*), *watch*, and the numbers between 0 and 60. Print the question on the board.

Show students the graph. Tell students that you will read the question and each of the possible answers one at a time. Ask students to raise their hands when their answer is read. Count up the number of hands raised after each answer and draw a box on the bar graph. Make sure that you use one pattern or color for each set of answers. For example, the answers for *watching* soccer have a polka-dot patterned box and the answers for *playing* soccer have a striped box as shown on the next page.

Follow-up activities

The completed graph can be used for a variety of oral and/or written language activities. Students can be asked questions such as:

How many students spend more than 45 minutes a week watching soccer?

Do students spend more time watching or playing soccer?

Students may also wish to practice asking one another the survey questions.

Writing activities can also be developed in conjunction with graphing activities. Students may be asked to write answers to questions such as:

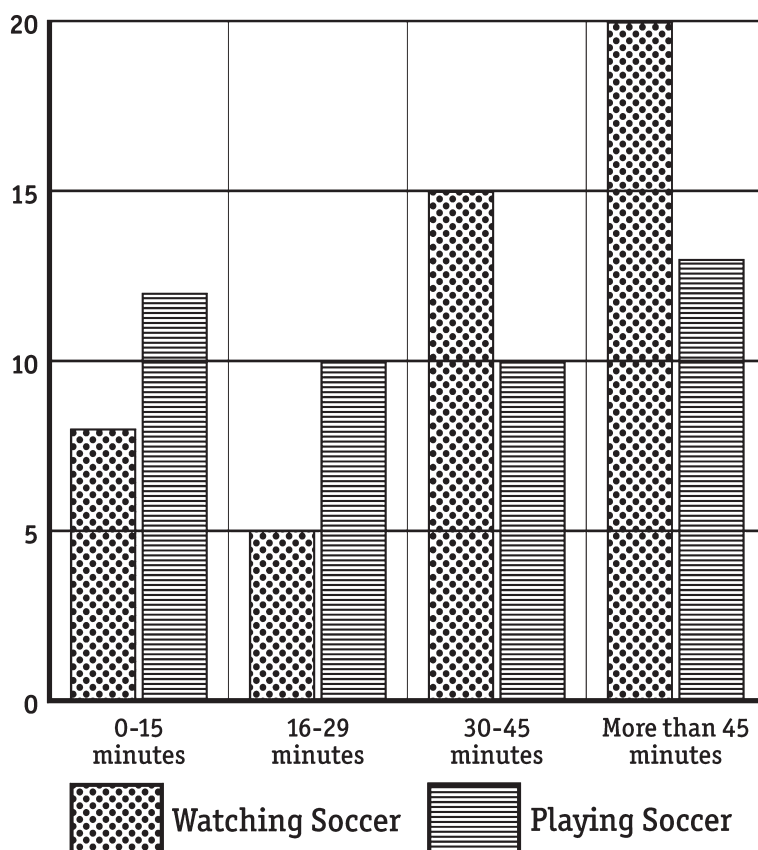
Do students prefer to play or watch soccer? Why?

Once students are familiar with the graphing activities, they may develop their own questions for future graph activities and submit those questions to their teachers in writing.

Graphing activities for other topics

Graphing Activities can be used for a wide variety of topics. Students can be surveyed or polled about their involvement in many different sports.

WATCHING AND PLAYING SOCCER



Graphing activities can also be used to poll other issues, such as how much time students spend studying or talking on the phone. Graphing activities also work well as a way to find out student preferences in food, leisure activities (TV watching, internet use, playing sports), work, and school subjects.

CAROLINE T. LINSE, Associate Professor, Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, Korea, is the author of numerous student textbooks. She is also the author of the forthcoming book: *Practical English Language Teaching: Young Learners* (McGraw Hill).